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## Trilateral Partnership in support of the UNESCO Wadden Sea World Heritage

### CONCEPT FOR A PARTNERSHIP HUB

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The Wadden Sea  
World Heritage Site  
since 2009



## 1 Introduction

The **inscription of the Wadden Sea on the UNESCO World Heritage List** in 2009, extended in 2011 and 2014, has strengthened, reinforced and enhanced the generation long efforts to protect, conserve and manage the Wadden Sea as a property shared between three nations for the benefit of present and future generations.

This creates a unique opportunity to pool and strengthen existing skills and experiences under one umbrella, to ensure protection and preservation of the Wadden Sea, whilst fostering sustainable regional development within the entire Wadden Sea Region. Only if these skills and experiences are jointly developed and mutually reinforced and linked together on a high-quality level throughout the Wadden Sea Region, will the full potential of the World Heritage designation be achieved for the benefit of nature, but also for society.

Bearing this in mind, the Ministers, responsible for the protection of the Dutch, German and Danish Wadden Sea, representing the Governments in the Trilateral Wadden Sea Governmental Council Meeting on the Protection of the Wadden Sea in Leeuwarden, 18 May 2018, in their **Leeuwarden Ministerial Declaration**

- instructed the Wadden Sea Board “to develop trilateral Wadden Sea World Heritage partnership schemes, to further activate the Wadden Sea World Heritage brand and to enhance local ownership, as a tool for creating synergies between nature conservation in the World Heritage Site and sustainable development in the Wadden Sea Region” (Article 1);
- and “to further develop the Partnership Hub as a part of the future Partnership Centre together with the envisaged partner organisations and in partner networks across the Wadden Sea Region, which involve partners at local and regional level” (Article 2).

To bring these decisions to life, a range of strategic partner network’s representatives from the Wadden Sea Forum e. V., the Wadden Sea Team of green NGOS, the trilateral Network Group Sustainable Tourism, the trilateral science community and the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation on of the Wadden Sea states (TWSC) signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** to kick off the strategic, multi-stakeholder “**Trilateral Partnership in support of the UNESCO Wadden Sea World Heritage**” (*in short: Trilateral WH Partnership*) on 30 June 2019 in Wilhelmshaven, on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inscription.

In acknowledgement of the long history of achievements and contributions of stakeholders/ potential partner’s networks to the preservation of the Wadden Sea, the Trilateral WH Partnership is based upon existing, proven structures and networks. The statutory responsibility for the preservation of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the site remains with the state parties.

Developing and sustaining a successful Trilateral WH Partnership, particularly across sectors and existing collaboration structures, is challenging and requires a significant investment of both time and resources. It needs an organisational set-up to to further develop, support it, keep it up and running effectively: A Partnership Hub for constant facilitation of network coordination and network management which provides an interface to the TWSC.

This concept for the Partnership Hub provides basis and justification for further decisions by the TWSC, the individual states and the strategic partners to invest specifically and concretely in its structure and operation, through all kind of support. This concept does not provide statutes or rules of play. These will be elaborated in a separate approach, later, as the partnership develops further on.

For clarification purpose, the Partnership Hub is defined as a form of organisation: a networking unit with no specific location, whereas the Partnership Centre is understood as the future physical premises of the Trilateral Wadden Sea World Heritage Partnership Centre in Wilhelmshaven.

## 2. Vision and Mission for the Partnership Hub

Vision	Mission
<p>The Partnership Hub helps to enhance ownership in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site. The hub maintains an extended and stable, multi-level and cross-border community in a networking approach, based on existing collaboration and structures, complementing governmental and intergovernmental efforts. It acts as a catalyst for innovative modes of collaboration in following the goals that are stated in the MoU, focusing on creation of collaborative advantages by also taking into account interests and individual value gained by the partners. It delivers network co-ordination and supports network management, knowledge exchange and mutual learning, facilitates the organisation of meetings, workshops and conferences, and activities to the Trilateral WH Partnership.</p>	<p>The Partnership Hub will broaden engagement for the Wadden Sea World Heritage beyond the state sector and unlock potentials and resources for delivering on the goals and intended activities of the Trilateral WH Partnership as described in the MoU. It will build and intensify pathways for collaboration towards realisation of the vision and thus help to extend the network of strategic partners in line with decisions of the TWSC and balanced intentions of the strategic partners.</p>

## 3. Objectives of the Partnership Hub

Key objectives for the work themes of the Partnership Hub have been defined by the MoU, which includes the Wadden Sea World Heritage Strategy (2014-2020) as a basis to start from. In short, the hub will support the Trilateral WH Partnership in a collaborative network approach, complementing and going beyond responsibilities and efforts of the TWSC, by

- contributing to the protection and stimulating exchange on nature management of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site
- enhancing international cooperation;
- activating and credibly using the Wadden Sea World Heritage brand;
- educating and informing about the Wadden Sea World Heritage;
- developing and enhancing sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea Region within limits of acceptable change whilst preserving the integrity of the Wadden Sea World Heritage
- contributing to regional sustainable development of the Wadden Sea Region in accordance with protection goals for the Wadden Sea World Heritage;
- stimulating research and monitoring to provide the required knowledge for management in the Wadden Sea Region;
- integrating cultural and historical values in the management of the Wadden Sea Region.

Partnership Hub activities will also help to implement the UN Sustainability Agenda 2030, UNNESCO Programmes under the World Heritage Convention and EU-Programmes.

#### **4. Services and offers of the Partnership Hub**

The hub will function as networking unit in cooperation with the strategic partners for the Trilateral WH Partnership. It will make best use of synergies and prevent duplications of activities in the region by complementing and supporting partnership initiatives and -programs at national or regional level. Strategic partners and the TWSC and the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS) will benefit through the activities of the hub by sharing services and participation in the brand, from enhanced visibility, credibility and reputation, political attention, an internationally and regionally raised profile as well as connectivity within the partnership's network. It will provide added value to all partners by increasing effectiveness and efficiency on their part.

The Hub will support the strategic partners to collaborate, encourage and facilitate effective and trustful working relationships and networks among each other, while sharing information, knowledge and experience.

Guided by the SMART principle (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound objective setting), it will in particular carry out the following activities:

##### **(1) Organise network development and support network management**

Designing and planning for a successful partnership require constant facilitation of overall network coordination in a collaborative approach and network management in support of the strategic partners. The hub will also help the Trilateral WH Partnership to broaden engagement for their goals by exploring opportunities to win new partners.

##### **(2) Organise communication for and of the Partnership**

Correspondents/ ambassadors of the partners within the Partnership Hub will play a two-way communication role, acting as the link contact points between the organisations they represent and the partnership itself. The external role of communication is to ensure that the work of the Trilateral WH Partnership will be visible, in particular in order to organise support and funding, and will complement the Trilateral Communication Strategy.

##### **(3) Communication and activation of the WSWH brand**

The hub will help to activate the WSWH brand for sustainable development, to foster brand engagement of strategic partners and stakeholders, f. e. by partnership programs, to enhance sustainable performance of partners, to co-create products and offers in accordance with brand values, to provide for a knowledge exchange platform and thus continue and stabilise the work initiated by EU-funded, time-limited projects like PROWAD LINK.

##### **(4) Facilitate knowledge production, exchange and mutual learning**

A "learning culture" will be fostered by the partnership through knowledge partnerships, i.e. one where all partners and their networks will be able to learn from one another by allowing new ideas to come forward in an open exchange of experience. The Hub will play a central role in the endeavour to

create added value derived from effective interaction and communication by providing a platform for interactions between researchers, policy makers, regional organisations including educational institutions, entrepreneurs, and the public at large. It will support the implementation of a trilateral research agenda which aims at establishing a joint program on research and monitoring relevant to the Wadden Sea World Heritage.

#### **(5) Facilitate and organise meetings, workshops and conferences**

Target groups for meetings, workshops and conferences will be members and otherwise associated persons to the trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation, the strategic partners, their networks and initiatives, as well as other national or international professionals, scientists in nature conservation, environmental protection and sustainable use of marine and coastal environments. Events facilitated or organised by the Partnership Hub can in principle be located anywhere in the Wadden Sea Region.

#### **(6) Facilitate planning of the work and initiation of common projects and activities**

The hub will encourage the evolvement of new ideas and initiatives to and by the partners in a forward way of visionary thinking in support of the Wadden Sea World Heritage. Common projects and activities will be developed and carried out in line with the general principles like described in Annex 1. The hub will develop and continuously update a planning tool/ working program, to prioritise and outline common future projects and activities of the partnership.

#### **(7) Facilitate individual agreements of cooperation on concrete projects, actions, deliverables, or exchange of goods/services**

In addition to the MoU, which lays the foundation to the Trilateral WH Partnership as a whole, the hub will facilitate negotiations about individual agreements of cooperation, where specific objectives, concrete common activities or projects will be described, documented, and bindingly agreed upon by teaming up two or few partners.

#### **(8) Project facilitation through fundraising and financial management**

The hub will offer project facilitation to the partners by assistance to applications for funds or fundraising and financial management. The hub might support common projects by seed money, but not with full funding.

### **5. Setting up the Partnership Hub**

The individual strategic partners' primary interest is the content-related work of the partnership as such and not its organisation. In general, the PH will be advised by the partner networks, those who were represented by signatories to the MoU. The network of partners within the Trilateral WH Partnership is supposed to develop further. Therefore, an initial organisational structure is needed to stabilise and support the work of the Partnership Hub.

For this purpose, the following elements are crucial:

- Permanent management structures;
- establishment of a managing unit independent from one single partner;
- well balanced/ adequate autonomy/ independence;

- commitment of all partners to goals and rules;
- financial resources.

As a prerequisite to answer the question of a suitable permanent organisational setting, the TWSC will develop a position on how to involve the partnership in overall policy. According to this positioning in discourse with the strategic partners, it can be assumed, that a more or less independent organisational setting from the CWSS will be the outcome. The OPteamPH will accompany and advise the start-up phase as advisory team.

As general requirement for operation, the hub needs resources for a proper staff, like at least a coordinator and well-connected liaison persons to set the activities in motion as described above. To mirror the strategic partner sectors involved, management capacity and professional expertise is required for their working fields.

As well as assessing the expected added value from the Trilateral WH Partnership for the Wadden Sea World Heritage, the TWSC and every partner organisation will assess the likely costs involved. Clearly, the development of the strategic partnership will involve increased staff time to negotiate and develop the partnership as well as to manage the relationship with partners and for partnership coordination. They will also likely require other 'hard' costs such as additional travel, external facilitation and meeting costs, as well non-tangible costs such as social and political capital.

It is obvious that the partnership's projects and activities have to draw on funds. The hub will be able to lever funding for the operational budget from a range of complementary sources. Commitment to the partnership will be expressed by contribution from all partners.

In setting up the Partnership Hub, a stepwise approach will be taken:

For a three-year start-up-phase (2020-22), appropriate human and financial resources by the TWSC are needed. A coordinating person needs to be appointed, operating more or less independent but associated to the CWSS during this start-up phase. He/she shall be complemented by liaison officers to the different sectors and working fields, provided for in shared ways/ by the partners including the TWSC. This start-up phase shall be concluded by an evaluation;

The Operational Team Partnership Hub, which paved the way to found the trilateral WH Partnership in 2019, will be transformed into a Partnership Hub Committee. The OPteamPH will prepare the transformation. The Terms of Reference and rules of procedure of the OPteamPH will be revised and amended in agreement with the WSB to serve the new function of the committee. The composition of group will also be revised by the signatories of the MoU/partner-consortium, nomination of who to sit on the committee will be (re-)confirmed. The Partnership Hub Committee shall be chaired by the executive secretary of the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat.

The committee shall report the outline of an annual work programme and proposed changes and updates of the Partnership Hub concept to the Wadden Sea Board for approval. Representatives of the partner networks within the committee report into their network organisations, consult with them and vice versa feed in their positions within their own responsibility and capacities. Decision making within the Partnership Hub Committee in general follows the consensus principle. It aims at ensuring agreement and participation by all partners.

The Partnership Hub administration unit associated to the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat acts as secretariat and support team to Partnership Hub Committee and partners insofar as engaged with common projects within the partnership. The management of projects and other deliveries of

the trilateral partnership are carried out in close cooperation between the partners involved, like in project partner consortia, supported and/or facilitated by the PH administration unit.

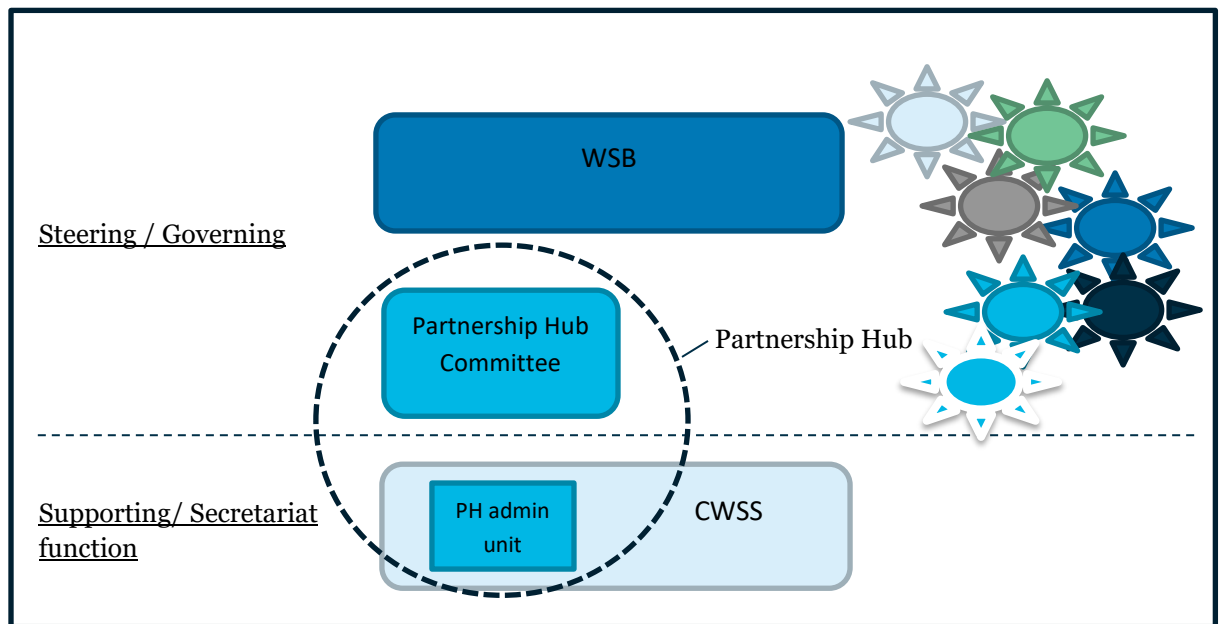


Figure 1: Structural setting of the Partnership Hub

For the long-term perspective, the Partnership Hub has to be developed into a more or less independent organisation as described within the draft PH concept. The results of the evaluation will be taken into account. Organisational options including the assignment of the Partnership Hub with existing or other structures as well as further funding possibilities will be elaborated in due time.

## **Glossary**

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#### **Trilateral Partnership in support of the UNESCO Wadden Sea World Heritage: A network of Networks**

The trilateral partnership is a strategic, multi-stakeholder, transboundary partnership, incorporating governmental and non-governmental sectors and networks committed to the protection of the Wadden Sea and sustainable regional development. The partners have agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding to set joint goals and ambitions.

#### **Trilateral Wadden Sea World Heritage Partnership Hub: Network management and platform**

The Partnership Hub supports the management and organisation of the trilateral partnership. It consists of the Partnership Hub Committee which guides the Trilateral Partnership, and the Trilateral Partnership Hub Administration Unit which carries out supporting and secretariat functions. During the start-up-phase (2020-2022), which was planned as part of the first concept for the Hub, agreed to by all partners, the Partnership Hub Administration Unit is directly associated with the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat.

#### **Trilateral Wadden Sea World Heritage Partnership Centre: Location**

The Partnership Centre is a building, currently under construction, which will serve the Partnership Hub, the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, the Wadden Sea Forum and the International Wadden Sea World Heritage Foundation, as home base for activities throughout the whole Wadden Sea Region. It will provide a venue for meetings, workshops and conferences organised in the trilateral partnership. The building in Wilhelmshaven is scheduled to be completed within a few years.

#### **Trilateral Wadden Sea World Heritage Foundation: Resources and international perception**

The trilateral foundation is intended to support transboundary initiatives and projects to safeguard the Outstanding Universal Value and to raise international profile and recognition. The foundation is considered to become a future funding source for the trilateral partnership.



## ANNEX 1

### **General principles for common projects and activities:**

- They are Wadden Sea World Heritage specific;
- They contribute to the protection of the Wadden Sea, to safeguarding its Outstanding Universal Value and to a sustainable Wadden Sea Region with socio-economic developments and vibrant communities;
- They fit under the thematic lines as defined in the WH strategy;
- They closely relate and contribute to the fulfilment of goals and objectives of the Trilateral WH Partnership as described in the MoU of the Trilateral Partnership in support of the UNESCO Wadden Sea World Heritage and the Concept for a Partnership Hub;
- As a minimum two or three regions collaborate, inspired by or inspiring the trilateral level; whereby region is defined as involving different countries (might be on a local level such as provinces or districts);
- Different stakeholders are involved; representing different sectors;
- Partners collaborate across sectors;
- Preferably collaboration between public/ state partners/ TWSC and non-public partners;
- They might be organised decentrally under the umbrella of the Partnership Hub;
- They communicate the goals and objectives of the Trilateral Partnership and demonstrate commitment to this network in support of the Wadden Sea World Heritage;
- They shall be branded as WSWH projects and activities;
- These projects and actions shall consider the safeguarding of the OUV and the integrity of the WH site when designed, (which means its potential impact before being implemented shall be assessed);
- The quality of possible actions/projects should outweigh the quantity as it is the aim of the collaboration to promote a high standard of quality and the sustainability of the products that will be developed and promoted.

